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Forests and chases in medieval Ireland, 1169–*c.*1399

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ABSTRACT

Irish forests and chases have been largely ignored by medievalists. Alongside parks and warrens, these were landscapes within which the elite sought to control not only access to hunting, but also to timber and woodland resources. The aim of this paper is to collate and review the evidence for forests and chases in Ireland in the period 1169–*c.*1399 and to examine the chronology of their creation, their ownership, uses and functions. The paper uses an interdisciplinary approach, combining historical, cartographic and archaeological evidence for past activity and provides an insight into these extensive medieval landscape features. It is demonstrated that in contrast to England, where forests and chases were important as elite hunting landscapes, in Ireland, they were most significant as sources of venison and timber and as a means of giving gifts and offices to high-ranking subjects.

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British medieval forests and chases have been the subject of numerous studies.[1] However, with some notable exceptions forests and chases have been largely ignored for Ireland, and even when these have been discussed, the focus has tended to be on woodland as a whole and its more recent history.[2] Alongside parks, which have been the subject of recent attention, these were landscapes within which the elite sought to control access to hunting, along with control of timber and wood resources.[3] The aim of this paper is therefore to collate and review the evidence for forests and chases in Ireland in the period 1169–*c.*1399 and to examine the chronology of their creation and use, and their ownership and functions. The starting date is defined by the arrival of the Anglo-Normans in Ireland, while the end point is somewhat more fluid. In England and much of Europe the high medieval period has often been defined as finishing at the end of the thirteenth century, after which point it is usual to refer to the late medieval period. However, social and political upheavals in the mid fourteenth century have been seen as marking a more significant turning point in Irish history, with the decline in Anglo-Norman control over the island and the resurgence of the Gaelic Irish.[4]

Irish forests and chases were governed under the Anglo-Norman legal system, which was based on that of England.

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[1] N.D.G. James, *A History of English Forestry*, Oxford, 1981; C. Young, *The Royal Forests of Medieval England*, Philadelphia, 1979; J.M. Gilbert, *Hunting and Hunting Reserves in Medieval Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1979; L.M. Cantor, Forests, chases, parks and warrens, in: L.M. Cantor (Ed.), *The English Medieval Landscape*, London, 1982, 56–85; J.M. Bond, Forests, chases, warrens and parks in medieval Wessex, in: M. Aston and C. Lewis (Eds), *The Medieval Landscape of Wessex*, Oxbow monograph 46, Oxford, 1994, 134–144; J.C. Cox, *The Royal Forests of England*, London, 1905; R. Grant, *The Royal Forests of England*, Stroud, 1991; J. Langton, Royal and non-royal forests and chases in England and Wales, *Historical Research* 88 (2015) 381–401; J. Langton and G. Jones (Eds), *Forests and Chases of Medieval England and Wales c. 1000–c.1500: Towards a Survey and Analysis*, Oxford, 2010; G.J. Turner, *Select Pleas of the Forest*, London, 1901; J. Langton, Forests and Chases of England and Wales c. 1000 to c. 1850, http://info.sjc.ox.ac.uk/forests last accessed 11 April 2017.

[2] E. Neeson, Woodland in history and culture, in: J.W. Foster and H.C.G. Chesney (Eds), *Nature in Ireland: A Scientific and Cultural History*, Dublin, 1997, 133–156; E. Neeson, *A History of Irish Forestry*, Dublin, 1991; N. Everett, *The Woods of Ireland: A History, 700–1800*, Dublin, 2014; P. Slattery, Woodland management, timber and wood production, and trade in Anglo-Norman Ireland, *c.*1170 to *c.*1350, *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 139 (2009) 63–79; H.F. Hore, Woods and fastnesses, and their denizens, in ancient Leinster, *Journal of the Kilkenny and South-east of Ireland Archaeological Society* 1 (1856) 229–240; A.C. Forbes, Some legendary and historical references to Irish woods, and their significance, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section B: Biological, Geological, and Chemical Science* 41 (1932–1933) 15–36; T.P. Le Fanu, The royal forest of Glencree, *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 23 (1893) 268–280.

[3] F. Beglane, *Anglo-Norman Parks in Medieval Ireland*, Dublin, 2015, 9–11, 88–89; Cantor, Forests, chases, parks and warrens; F. Beglane, Theatre of power: the Anglo-Norman park at Earlspark, Co. Galway, Ireland, *Medieval Archaeology* 58 (2014) 307–317; F. Beglane, The medieval park of Maynooth, *Journal of the Kildare Archaeological Society* 20 (2015) 56–70; F. Beglane, Deer parks: lost medieval monuments of the Irish countryside, in: V. McAlister and T. Barry (Eds), *Space and Settlement in the Middle Ages*, Dublin, 2015, 151–166.

[4] T.B. Barry, *The Archaeology of Medieval Ireland*, London, 1987, 168, 197; T. McNeill, *Castles in Ireland: Feudal Power in a Gaelic World*, London, 1997, 173; G.H. Orpen, *Ireland under the Normans: 1169–1333*, Oxford, 1911–1920, Volume 4, 157–159.

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Generally, at that time, the law as it applied in England was deemed to be valid in Ireland, except in particular cases where legislation might be modified to suit the circumstances.[5] As with England, justice was locally administered through a series of manorial and county courts as well as courts held by those towns and rural areas with borough status and courts held by the exchequer. There were also ecclesiastical courts that had jurisdiction over certain matters and over offences in the 'crosslands' or church-held lands. Royal justice was administered by the courts of the Justiciar, the common bench and itinerant justices as well as special commissions.[6] A significant portion of the Anglo-Norman held regions of Ireland, particularly in the east, were governed as 'liberties'.[7] These were lordships in which the lord had much greater rights than in shired counties. He had administration and jurisdiction over all aspects of the liberty, with the exception of the 'four pleas of the crown': arson, rape, treasure trove and forestall or highway robbery. In the case of the liberty of Trim, now in Co. Meath, the lord even had jurisdiction over these. The chief officer of a liberty was the seneschal, and each liberty had its own separate system of administration and justice.

Compared to England, relatively few Irish medieval documents have survived. For example, there are no original records of shire government, and only isolated examples from liberties, with only two manorial court rolls surviving for the entire medieval period.[8] Documents were lost through various mishaps over the centuries, not least the Four Courts fire of 1922, in which large numbers of records were destroyed. All of this means that specific evidence relating to the judicial system within forests and chases is limited. What evidence has been identified in this project has been gleaned from published sources and calendars, although it is likely that other references are present in currently unpublished documents. Even less information is available regarding the attitudes of the Gaelic Irish to the specific imposition of forests and chases on the landscape as compared with the granting of lands that had previously been held by them. Occasionally individuals with Irish names are mentioned in documents as, for example, tenants of a manor, but this is often the extent of our knowledge. One thing that can be said is that throughout the later medieval period and up to the time of the Plantations in the seventeenth century, the uplands and woodlands were the stronghold of Gaelic rebels.[9] For example, in the later thirteenth century the mountains of the forested area south of Dublin provided a base for the O'Tooles to raid the more settled lands.[10]

Given the lack of study to date, the patchy nature of the historical and archaeological evidence and the importance of these landscape forms, it was felt that this topic could be best addressed using an interdisciplinary approach. Initially, a wide range of published documentary sources were systematically searched for relevant material.[11] From this, cartographic and place name evidence was used to identify the forests and chases referred to. Both published and unpublished zooarchaeological evidence was of value in examining the role of hunting in the forests and of wild meat in elite diets. The paper first examines the origins and definitions of forests and chases, demonstrating their widespread existence across Europe, before focusing on Irish examples. It then looks at the locations, functions, administration and disafforestation of the forests. Finally, the paper concludes that while this landscape form was introduced by the Anglo-Normans, political and economic realities meant that the main functions of the Irish forests were slightly different to those in England. In Ireland, there was a focus on them as sources of venison and timber and as a means of giving gifts and offices to high-ranking subjects rather than as locations for elite hunting.

Origins and definitions

The first recorded usage of the word *forestum* or *forestis* is with reference to the Ardennes in AD648. Forests in the legal sense have been identified in a number of countries including England, Scotland, Wales, France, Belgium, Germany and Italy.[12] There is debate as to the origin and meaning of the word, although it probably comes from the Latin *foris*, meaning 'outside'.[13] Oliver Rackham thought that it meant 'tract of trees' whereas, by contrast, Chris Wickham stressed that it defined rights to the land rather than vegetation. Crucially though, in the seventh to ninth centuries, it was land 'in royal possession' and by the thirteenth century in both England and in what is now Germany the word related to 'land reserved for the use of the king, above all for his hunting'.[14] In early medieval Germany *Wildbann* or *eremus* land referred to desolate wilderness that was held by the king. Often these areas were subsequently declared to be forests, probably where pressure on land by colonising peasants resulted in the king choosing to preserve his hunting and timber rights over hitherto unused ground.[15] Within the forest the king was 'outside' the concerns and pressures of state and everyday life, in a place where his prerogative held sway. Therefore the forest, the venison and indeed the act of hunting took on enormous symbolic significance, and any violation of these was an act of direct opposition to the king himself.[16]

As elsewhere, the concept of a hunting reserve existed in England prior to the Norman conquest, although the complexity of the system at this early date has been the subject of debate.[17] The number of such reserves expanded to over six hundred during the later medieval period.[18] In Wales, there were over two hundred and fifty examples, of which only a few were royal forests. Many had been set up by marcher lords, who held their land as liberties, and

[5] Orpen, *Ireland under the Normans*, Volume 4, 41–44.

[6] P. Connolly, *Medieval Record Sources*, Dublin, 2002, 23, 30–31.

[7] K. Stringer, States, liberties and communities in medieval Britain and Ireland (c.1100–1400), in: M. Prestwich (Ed.), *Liberties and Identities in the Medieval British Isles*, Woodbridge, 2008, 5–36.

[8] Connolly, *Medieval Record Sources*, 30–31; Sparky Brooker, personal communication; P. Dryburgh and B. Smith, *Handbook and Select Calendar of Sources for Medieval Ireland in the National Archives of the United Kingdom*, Dublin, 2005, 230–241.

[9] H.S. Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland, 1171–1307*, London, 1875–1886, Volume 2, no. 156.

[10] J. Lydon, A land at war, in: A. Cosgrove (Ed.), *A New History of Ireland: Volume 2: Medieval Ireland 1169–1534*, Oxford, 1987, 240–274, 256–264.

[11] It is not proposed to give a detailed review of these here. The reader is referred to Connolly, *Medieval Record Sources*.

[12] C. Wickham, *Land and Power: Studies in Italian and European Social History, 400–1200*, London, 1994, 156, 160; Gilbert, *Hunting and Hunting Reserves in Medieval Scotland*; O. Rackham, *The History of the Countryside*, London, 1987, 131; J. Langton, Forests and chases in Wales and the Welsh Marches: an exploration of their origin and characteristics, *Journal of Historical Geography* 37 (2011) 263–272.

[13] R.P. Harrison, *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization*, Chicago and London, 1992, 69.

[14] Rackham, *The History of the Countryside*, 129; Wickham, *Land and Power*, 159–160.

[15] R. Keiss, The word 'forst/forest' as an indicator of fiscal property and possible consequences for the history of Western European forests, in: C. Watkins (Ed.), *European Woods and Forests*, Oxford, 1998, 11–18.

[16] W.P. Marvin, *Hunting Law and Ritual in English Medieval Literature*, Woodbridge, 2006, 46–48, 70, 143; Harrison, *Forests*, 69–81.

[17] Grant, *The Royal Forests of England*, 7–10; D. Hooke, Medieval forests and parks in southern and central England, in: Watkins (Ed.), *European Woods and Forests*, 19–32.

[18] G. Jones, A 'common of hunting'?: forests lordship and community before and after the conquest, in: Langton and Jones (Eds), *Forests and Chases of Medieval England and Wales*, 36–67.

so were free to impose their own forest law.[19] In Scotland, John Gilbert has demonstrated that the forest system was based on the Norman or Frankish models, with the earliest extant references being dated to the period 1136–1144. He maintained that there was no system of hunting reserves controlled by the king prior to this, but that kings would have had favoured hunting areas. In the high medieval period, the Scottish forests were concentrated in the east of the country, but they gradually spread westward. Unlike England and Ireland, where disafforestation was a feature of the thirteenth century, new forest creation continued to a certain extent right up to the seventeenth century.[20]

In England, by the later medieval period 'forest' could include woodland, heath, farmland and even villages, and could incorporate both lands that were held by the king or by his subjects.[21] These large areas were not necessarily enclosed, although in certain circumstances both temporary and permanent fences might be present.[22] Instead they were legally defined places that were subject to forest law as well as common law, with their own set of courts including the 'forest eyre', attachment and swanimote courts.[23] Any enclosure of land within the bounds of a forest, including for agriculture or for park formation, required royal permission.[24] A 'chase' or 'chace' was similar to a forest in that it signified control over hunting, but in theory it was controlled by a noble, who would have needed royal permission, known as a 'grant of free chase'.[25] Despite this, the words forest and chase are sometimes used interchangeably and there were both royal chases and non-royal forests.[26]

The definition of forest, *forestis* or *forestum*, as opposed to woodland, *boscum* or *silvis*, can cause problems when using calendared or translated texts, since some editors seem to have used the words interchangeably.[27] A further complication is that during later medieval times 'forest' could also be used to refer to woodland held in demesne, in other words as part of the lands retained for the use of the lord.[28] One Irish example of this is at Maynooth, Co. Kildare, where the 'forest' of Croghmore is listed as part of the lands of the fitzGerald lordship in an assignment of dower of 1283, and in 1540–1541 this same, very limited area is described as '100 acres of wood and underwood called Crymore'.[29] An area of one hundred acres would be of significance in terms of timber resources but would have had more limited value as a hunting reserve for deer and wild pigs, the animals preserved within forests.

Irish forests and chases

In 1169, Richard fitzGilbert de Clare (Strongbow) arrived in Ireland at the head of an army that sought to regain Leinster for his ally Dermot MacMurrough. Subsequently, in 1171 Henry II landed at Waterford with several thousand men and over the next few months received the fealty of a number of Irish kings. Henry then granted large tracts of land to Anglo-Norman lords, within which the new settlers created a network of manors and instituted a legal system based on that in England. Some of the Anglo-Norman lands were directly controlled by the king through a number of counties. However, much of the land was held as 'liberties', particularly in eastern Ireland.[30]

A number of documents from after this initial period of Anglo-Norman settlement refer to forests in general or to forests as a legal concept. The earliest known of these dates to 1199, when Milo de Bret received a licence to hunt and take foxes and hares throughout the king's forests of Ireland.[31] The following year the Knights Hospitallers were freed from any requirement to perform works in royal forests.[32] These rights did not necessarily mean that forests existed in areas that would have had an effect on the Hospitallers, but instead these are legal documents that sought to ensure that the order would have the same range of liberties that they had in England. One of the most important of these general documents was the *Magna Carta for Ireland*, which will be further discussed below.[33]

Since forests and chases were legally defined areas rather than having a particular physical form, they have left no direct archaeological trace. Documentary evidence has proved crucial in identifying them, some of which, such as the Cratloe Woods, Co. Clare or Glencree, Co. Wicklow, are still large areas of woodland or unfarmed open land. Table 1 and Fig. 1 set out the documented royal forests at various locations in medieval Ireland, as well as general geographical references to forests in Dublin and Leinster.

Due to the nature of the surviving documentary evidence the majority of records of Irish forests and chases relate to those held by the king. Large areas of what are now the counties of Dublin and Wicklow were designated as royal forest, including Coillach (now Lower Talbotstown), Glencree, Glendalough, Obrun (the area around Powerscourt) and Slefco/Slescho, the location of which is unclear but which appears to have been in the Dublin region.[34] In addition to these, which were conveniently located for Dublin, the king also held forests at Decies in Co. Waterford, Connacht, Trybary and Cracelauh. H.S. Sweetman considered that Trybary was

[19] W. Linnard, *Welsh Woods and Forests*, Llandysul, 2000, 38; Rackham, *The History of the Countryside*, 131; R. Silvester, Forests of the Welsh borderlands, in: Langton and Jones (Eds), *Forests and Chases of Medieval England and Wales*, 141–154.

[20] Gilbert, *Hunting and Hunting Reserves in Medieval Scotland*, 5–13, 39–48.

[21] L.M. Cantor and J.D. Wilson, The medieval deer-parks of Dorset: II, *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society* 84 (1963) 145–153; James, *A History of English Forestry*, 3; Rackham, *The History of the Countryside*, 130; K. Watts, Wiltshire deer parks: an introductory survey, *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine* 89 (1996) 88–98.

[22] J. Langton, Forest fences: enclosures in a pre-enclosure landscape, *Landscape History* 35 (2014) 5–30.

[23] E.C. Wright, Common law in the thirteenth-century English royal forest, *Speculum* 3 (1928) 166–191; Young, *The Royal Forests of Medieval England*, 89.

[24] L.M. Cantor and J.D. Wilson, The medieval deer-parks of Dorset: III, *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society* 85 (1964) 141–152; James, *A History of English Forestry*, 5; Watts, Wiltshire deer parks; Young, *The Royal Forests of Medieval England*, 16, 68.

[25] Cantor, Forests, chases, parks and warrens, 70; Watts, Wiltshire deer parks.

[26] Cantor and Wilson, The medieval deer-parks of Dorset: III, 141; Grant, *The Royal Forests of England*, 30–31; James, *A History of English Forestry*, 5; Watts, Wiltshire deer parks, 141–142; Langton, Royal and non-royal forests and chases in England and Wales.

[27] P. MacCotter and K.W. Nicholls, *The Pipe Roll of Cloyne (Rotulus Pipae Clonensis)*, Midleton, 1996, 29, 59.

[28] Gilbert, *Hunting and Hunting Reserves in Medieval Scotland*, 19.

[29] G. Mac Niocaill, *The Red Book of the Earls of Kildare*, Dublin, 1964, 120; G. Mac Niocaill, *Crown Surveys of Land 1540–41 with the Kildare Rental Begun in 1518*, Dublin, 1992, 142.

[30] B. Hartland, The liberties of Ireland in the reign of Edward I, in: Prestwich (Ed.), *Liberties and Identities in the Medieval British Isles*, 200–216; A.J. Otway-Ruthven, *A History of Medieval Ireland*, New York, 1968, 41, 48–50, 174; F.J. Byrne, The trembling sod: Ireland in 1169, in: Cosgrove (Ed.), *A New History of Ireland: Volume 2*, 1–42; R. Frame, *Ireland and Britain 1170–1450*, Lancaster, 1998, 16–17; Orpen, *Ireland Under the Normans*, Volume 1, 247.

[31] Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 1, no. 100.

[32] Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 1, no. 123.

[33] J.T. Gilbert, *Historical and Municipal Documents of Ireland, 1172–1320*, London, 1870, 65–72; H.F. Berry, *Statutes and Ordinances, and Acts of the Parliament of Ireland, King John to Henry V*, Dublin, 1907, 17, 19.

[34] M. Murphy and M. Potterton, *The Dublin Region in the Middle Ages*, Dublin, 2010, 78; L. Price, The grant to Walter de Ridelesford of Brien and the land of the sons of Turchil, *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 84 (1954) 72–77; L. Simpson, Anglo-Norman settlement in Uí Briúin Cualann, 1169–1350, in: K. Hannigan and W. Nolan (Eds), *Wicklow History and Society*, Dublin, 1994, 192; D. Iredale and J. Barrett, *Discovering Local History*. second edition, Risborough, 2003, 117.

Table 1
Documented royal forests. Numbers in brackets refer to Fig. 1.

Date	Location	Reference
Leinster		
1206–7, 1219–20 (six times), 1220, 1228–9, 1229 (six times) 1229–30 (twice), 1230 (twice), 1231, 1262	General or wide ranging references to royal forest	McNeill, *Calendar of Archbishop Alen's Register*, 62, 81; Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 1, nos 316, 926, 927, 930, 932, 933, 951, 1657, 1757, 1760, 1765, 1770, 1776, 1769, 1783, 1787, 1823, 1860, 2336.
1181–99	Leinster	McNeill, *Calendar of Archbishop Alen's Register*, 26.
1181–99, 1203, 1205, 1213, 1225, 1225–6	Coillach (1)	Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 1, nos. 180, 276, 475, 1317, 1359.
1213, 1219 1225, 1225–6, 1229, 1256–71, 1395 (twice)	Glendalough (2)	McNeill, *Calendar of Archbishop Alen's Register*, 142; Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 1, nos. 475, 892, 1317, 1359; A Calendar of Irish Chancery Letters, PR18 Ric. II, nos.90, 96; Gilbert, *Historical and Municipal Documents of Ireland*, 538–41.
1237	Obrun (3)	Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 1, no. 2409.
1250, 1251	Slefco/Slescho (5)	Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 1, nos. 3076, 3197.
1282, 1283, 1284, 1285, 1287, 1288, 1289, 1289–90, 1290 (twice), 1291, 1292 (twice), 1293 (twice), 1296 (four times), 1297, 1305, 1308	Glencree (4)	Mills and Griffiths, *Calendar of the Justiciary Rolls*, ii, 35; Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 2, nos. 2002, 2084, 2195; Volume 3, nos. 92, 309, 371, 542, 581, 641, 741, 965, 1148, 1151; Volume 4, nos. 21, 41, 300, 329, 352, 408; Gilbert, *Chartularies of St. Mary's Abbey, Dublin*, nos. 1, 118a; Dryburgh and Smith, *Inquisitions and Extents of medieval Ireland*, no. 160; Berry, *Statutes and Ordinances, and Acts of the Parliament of Ireland*, 219.
1290	Dublin (5)	McNeill, *Calendar of Archbishop Alen's Register*, 152.
1301–2	Lynn Co. Westmeath (6)	Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 5, no. 18.
Munster		
1219, 1227, 1253, 1282	Decies	Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 1, nos. 892, 1513; Volume 2, no. 241; Dryburgh and Smith, *Inquisitions and Extents of medieval Ireland*, no. 40.
1251	Limerick (7)	Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 1, no. 3164.
1251	Limerick and Cork	Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 1, no. 3137; Mac Niocaill, *The Red Book of the Earls of Kildare*, no. 2.
1252	Cracelauh (Cratloe) (8)	Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 2, no. 51.
1252–3	Tradery and Ockormock (9)	Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 2, no. 155.
1218	Trybary (Tipperary?) Munster, Emly (10)	Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 1, no. 849.
1301–2	Fennor, Co. Tipperary (11)	Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 5, no. 18.
1253–4	Thomond	Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 2, nos. 321, 434.
1254–5		
Connacht		
1227	Connacht	Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 1, no. 1512; Volume 2, nos. 321, 407, 434.
1253–4		
1254–5		
1254		
Unspecified locations		
1252	Ireland	Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 2, no. 112.
1254	Ireland	Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 2, no. 404.

probably Tipperary. O'Conor identified Cracelauh as Cratloe, Co. Clare, near Limerick, while others had previously suggested Carlow.[35] Cratloe is probably correct for three reasons. In 1215 Geoffrey Luttrell paid twenty ounces of gold to have land and a wood at a place called Cratelach/Cratelerch in Thomond.[36] Then, in 1251 Roger Waspayl was given a right of free warren for lands at Radguel, Limerick, provided that his lands lay outside the forest. Radguel is modern Rathkeale, Co. Limerick, and as Limerick was a royal centre a forest nearby would have been an important resource.[37] Finally, in 1252 Robert de Muscegros was granted two hundred oaks from the forest of Cracelauh, which Rory Sherlock believes were destined for Muscegros's nearby castle at Bunratty, Co. Clare.[38] These examples from Limerick and Clare illustrate another potential problem. Sometimes a forest is referred to as being near a particular place, and if there are two or more references in one general area it can then be difficult to determine if all are referring to the same forest, or to multiple smaller forests.

Private forests and rights of free chase are recorded in all four provinces of Ireland, held by the first tier of the Anglo-Norman elite, by the archbishop of Dublin and the monks of Duiske (Graiguenamanach) (Table 2). It is notable that many of the elite families also created forests in their Welsh marcher lordships, for example the de Clares at Pembroke and the de Lacys at Ewyas Lacy.[39] In many cases only the existence of the Irish forests and chases is recorded, and there is little or no detail. There are three references to what seems to be demesne woodland rather than true 'forest': at Maynooth, at Duiske and at Old Ross, although there is also a true forest recorded at Ross.[40] Only six documentary references have been

[35] Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 1 no. 849; K. O'Conor, Medieval rural settlement in Munster, in: J. Ludlow and N. Jameson (Eds), *Medieval Ireland: The Barryscourt Lectures I–X*, Cork, 2004, 225–256; Rackham, *The History of the Countryside*, 131; Iredale and Barrett, *Discovering Local History*, 117.

[36] Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 1, nos. 580, 633.

[37] Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 1, no. 3164; T.J. Westropp, Ancient castles of the County of Limerick, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* Section C 26 (1907) 201–264.

[38] Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 2, no. 51; R. Sherlock, An introduction to the history and architecture of Bunratty Castle, *Limerick and South-west Ireland: Medieval Art and Architecture*, Oakville, 2011, 202–218.

[39] Langton and Jones (Eds), *Forests and Chases of Medieval England and Wales*, 38; Ewyas Lacy Study Group, The history of Ewyas Lacy, <http://www.ewyaslacy.org.uk/Ewyas-Lacy/Manorial-records-for-the-Lordships-of-Clifford-and-Ewyas-Lacy-with-deeds/1377-1505/gc_ewy_0010> last accessed 12 April 2017.

[40] G. Orpen, Charters of Earl Richard Marshal of the forests of Ross and Taghmon, *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 4 (1934) 54–63.

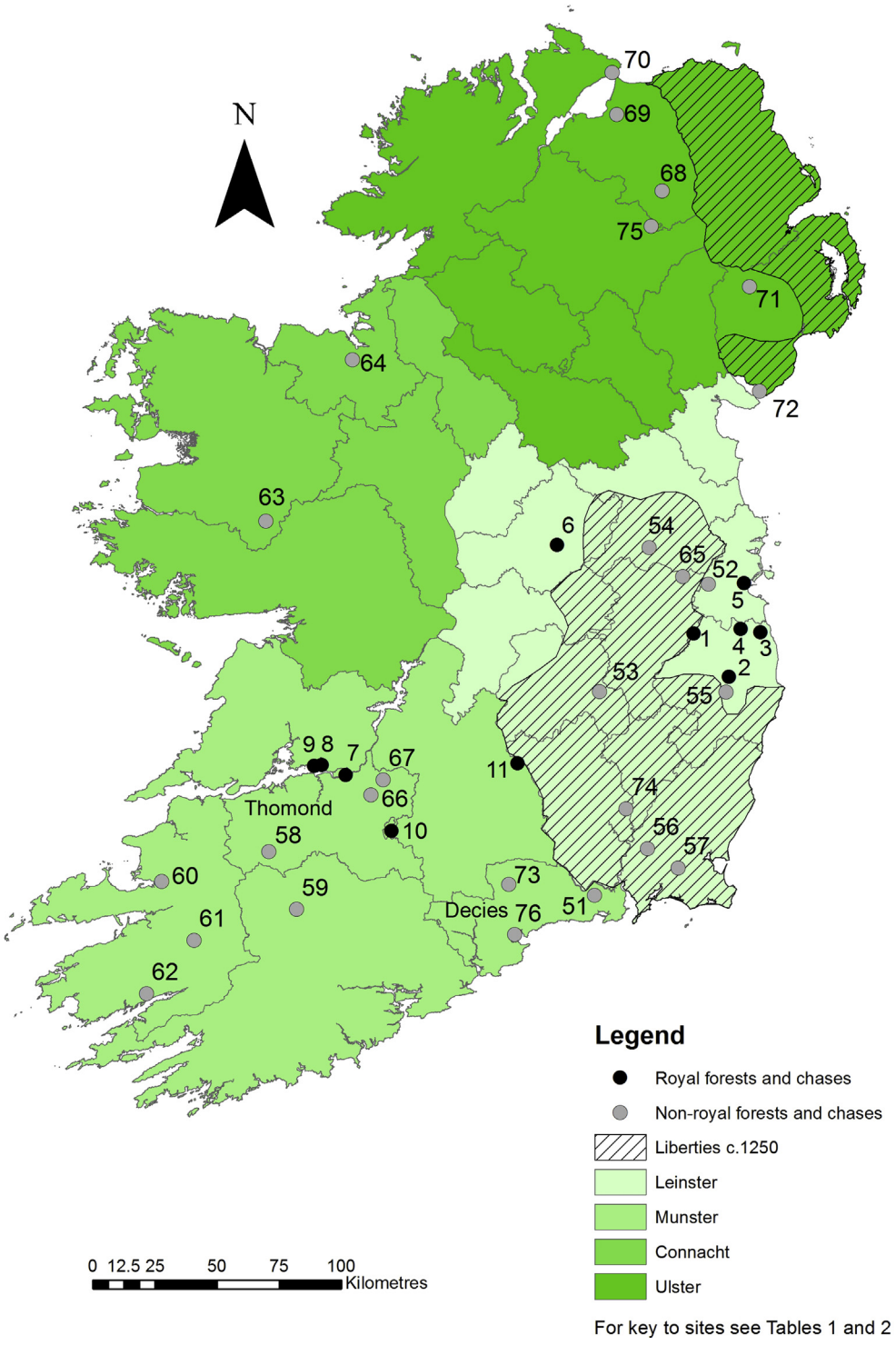

Fig. 1. Royal and non-royal forests on modern county and province boundaries, with liberties *c.* 1250 from Stringer, States, liberties and communities in medieval Britain and Ireland. For key to sites see Tables 1 and 2.

found to rights of free chase actually being awarded. The first of these was in *c.* 1185, when Alard, son of William, received the right to hunt stag, doe, pig, hare, wolf and rabbit on his lands, in other words both free chase and free warren. Another early example is in 1213 when Alan fitzRoland of Galloway in Scotland was granted the 'forest' within his Irish lands. Then, in 1244, Maurice fitzGerald gained free chase for lands in 'Conmakonekule and Luyne' (Kilmaine, Co. Mayo and Leyny, Co. Sligo) and another Geraldine, John fitzThomas gained the same for lands in 'Okonyl, Muskry, Kery, Yonach and Orathat', that is, lands in Cos. Cork, Limerick and Kerry.[41] It was a further sixty years before the next recorded grants.

[41] E. Curtis, *Calendar of the Ormond Deeds*, Dublin, 1932–1943, Volume 1, no. 7; Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 1, nos. 463, 2680.

Table 2
Documented non-royal forests and grants of free chase. Numbers in brackets refer to Fig. 1.

Date	Names as given	Location	Reference
c. 1185	Alard son of William	Carreckenard (51), Carrec Eghon in Waterford, land near Wexford, Leschker near Dublin (52), Baliocculenan (53), near Kildare, Maguini	Curtis, *Calendar of the Ormond Deeds*, Volume 1, no. 7.
1211–2, 1297	In the King's hand. Geoffrey de Geneuyll (Geneville)	Trim Co. Meath (54)	Davies and Quinn, The Irish pipe roll of 14 John, 37; Deputy keeper of the records, *Calendar of the Patent Rolls*, Edw. III, Volume 5, 53; J. Mills and M.J. McEnery, *Calendar of the Gormanstown Register*, Dublin, 1916, 8; Mills and M.C. Griffiths, *Calendar of the Justiciary Rolls*, Volume 1, 146.
1213	Alan fitzRoland	Lands in Ireland	Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 1, no. 463.
1228–55, 1228–44, 1255–66, 1256–66, 1256–71, 1395	Archbishop of Dublin	Dublin/Wicklow forests of the Archbishop of Dublin: Castle Kevyne: Lakyn and Muneglas, wood of Glasdrey. Kiladreny, wood of Ballilorant. Ballymaclocher, Ballydergory, Ballyomorthey and Ballyofinan. Ballymor, lands include Kilgarsan/ Kilgarchane/Kilgarthane, Glandeluri. (55)	McNeill, *Calendar of Archbishop Alen's Register*, 69–70, 81, 120–1, 123–4, 136; A Calendar of Irish Chancery Letters, PR 18 Rich. II, no. 96.
1231 × 1234 1275, 1276 (five times), 1278, 1281, 1282–3	Richard de Clare, Earl Marshal	Ross and Taghmon Co. Wexford (56, 57)	Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 2, nos. 1109, 1295, 1296, 1298, 1299, 1308, 1445; Orpen, Charters of Earl Richard Marshal of the forests of Ross and Taghmon; H.F. Hore, *History of the Town and County of Wexford.* London, 1900–1911. Volume 1, 11, 148.
1244	John fitzThomas	Okonyl (58), Muskry (59), Kery (60), Yonach (61) and Orathat (62) (parts of Cork, Kerry and Limerick)	Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 1, no. 2680.
1244	Maurice fitzGerald	Conmakonekule (63) and Luyne (64) (Kilmaine, Co. Mayo and Leyny Co. Sligo)	Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 1, no. 2680.
1283	Johanna de Burgh dower from fitzGeralds	Maynooth, Co. Kildare (65)	Mac Niocaill, *The Red Book of the Earls of Kildare*, no. 120.
1304		Limerick: Estermoy (66) and Oenye (67) Ulster: Torterye (68), Kenath (69), Kenalowen (75), Inchyven (70), Menkone (71), and Matherne (72)	Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 5, no. 304.
1304		Slefto (Slievegue, Co. Waterford) (73)	Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 5, 331.
1307	Roger le Bigod	Old Ross, Co Wexford (56)	Dryburgh and Smith, *Inquisitions and Extents of medieval Ireland*, no. 136.
1331	William de Bermingham in the forest of the monks of Duiske	Duiske (Graiguenamanach Co. Kilkenny) (74)	B. Williams, *The Annals of Ireland by Friar John Clyn*, AD1331. Dublin, 2007.
1369–70	William de Wyndesore	Dungarvan 'le Blackcastle' Co Waterford (76)	J.C. Erck, *Inrolments on the patent rolls of chancery in Ireland: Commencing with the reign of King James I.* Ed III. Volume 1 Part 1, Dublin, 1846. xiv, 222.

In 1304, Richard de Burgh received a grant of free chase in Torterye, Kenath, Kenalowen, Inchyven, Menkone and Matherne, in the earldom of Ulster, and in Cenyde and Estermoy, Co. Limerick. In the same year Eustace le Poer received a grant of free chase for his demesne lands in Slefto, Co. Waterford.[42] The archbishopric of Dublin is recorded as holding considerable areas of forest, mainly to the south and southwest of Dublin City, including Castlekevin and Glenmalure.[43] Among the best documented were the forests of Richard, earl marshal, at Ross and Taghmon in his liberty of Leinster.[44] Herbert Hore identified that the forest in the liberty of Trim was at Kilmore (the 'big wood'), close to Rathmolyon, some seven kilometres south of Trim town.[45] This particular example is first documented in 1211–1212 because at the time the lands were in the hands of the king.[46] It is likely that many other holders of liberties had private forests on their lands, but unfortunately extant records of the liberties are limited.

The functions of Irish forests

The locations of the known forests lead on to their functions, which were to preserve game and timber for the use of the king or magnate.[47] The holder of a royal or non-royal forest had the right to hold forest courts and employ foresters, and Jack Langton has noted that private individuals with rights of free chase also instituted their own chase courts to uphold the protection of vert (grazing) and venison.[48]

Where function is recorded, it is notable that the majority of references to Irish forests relate to timber rather than to hunting, and in this regard they are different to those in England. The original intention of the conquest of Ireland was probably that settlement and society would take the same form as in England. However, it has been argued elsewhere, on the basis of the relative numbers of medieval parks, and of both red and fallow deer bones from excavations, that deer hunting played a much smaller role in Anglo-

[42] Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 5, nos 304, 331.
[43] Murphy and Potterton, *The Dublin Region in the Middle Ages*, 76–80; C. McNeill, *Calendar of Archbishop Alen's Register c.1172–1534*, Dublin, 1950, 69–70, 81, 120–121, 123–124, 136; A Calendar of Irish Chancery Letters. PR18 Rich.II, no. 96, http://chancery.tcd.ie last accessed 5 September 2015.
[44] Orpen, Charters of Earl Richard Marshal of the forests of Ross and Taghmon.
[45] Hore, Woods and fastnesses.
[46] O. Davies and D.B. Quinn, The Irish pipe roll of 14 John, 1211–12, *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, 3rd Series, 4 (supplement) (1941) 37.
[47] Rackham, *The History of the Countryside*, 136; G. Simpson, English cathedrals as sources of forest and woodland history, in: Watkins (Ed.), *European Woods and Forests*, 40.
[48] Langton, Royal and non-royal forests and chases in England and Wales.

Table 3
Summary of zooarchaeological evidence for beasts of the chase. Source: Beglane, The social significance of game in the diet of later medieval Ireland.

	Total NISP	Total deer	Red deer	Fallow deer
Castles NISP	**32611**	**316**	**208**	**72**
Castles % NISP		1.0	0.6	0.2
Ecclesiastical NISP	**4415**	**6**	**4**	**2**
Ecclesiastical % NISP		0.1	0.1	0.05
Urban NISP	**49069**	**214**	**207**	**7**
Urban % NISP		0.4	0.4	0.01
Rural NISP	**10298**	**24**	**15**	**0**
Rural % NISP		0.2	0.1	0
Overall Total	**96393**			

NISP = Number of Identified Specimens Present. Note that the deer total includes elements positively identified as red or fallow as well as those elements where it was not possible to distinguish between the two. Also note that the urban figures exclude quantified caches of antler-working waste.

Norman elite culture than it did in England, a point that is further discussed below.[49] Most of the recorded forests are located close to the major Anglo-Norman centres in Dublin, Waterford, Wexford, Limerick and Tipperary. The exception could be argued to be Connacht, which in 1227 was peripheral to Anglo-Norman settlement, not being under direct Anglo-Norman control until 1235–1236.[50] The availability and control of timber in areas close to these towns is likely to have been the main driver in their designation as forest since the timber would have been a valuable resource for building in those regions. Similarly, in England, individual forests were assigned to provide timber for ongoing repair of particular castles and towns.[51] Timber could even be exported from Ireland. For example, in May 1290, one hundred pounds in silver was issued to William de Mones to pay for timber from Glencree to be sent to Wales, where Queen Eleanor was constructing a castle at Haverford. This evidently took some time as it was July before the wages were paid to the various workmen and carpenters involved.[52] Private individuals could also buy timber, as in November 1291 when wood from Glencree was sold for six shillings.[53]

Timber for building was often used as a gift to favoured subjects and ecclesiastical houses. For example, in 1284 the prior and convent of St Patrick's in Dublin received twenty oak trees from Glencree to repair burnt houses and in 1299 the prior of All Saints near Dublin was to receive four oaks from Glencree to repair his mill and bridge.[54] Various officers of the forest were entitled to receive timber and firewood as part of the perquisites of their position, and other individuals and local residents could also have rights. A regular right to these was called 'estovers' and included firebote, haybote, housebote and ploughbote: which were the rights to collect firewood, wood for fencing, construction and making ploughs respectively.[55] In 1228–1244, Archbishop Luke of Dublin granted William de Belinges and his wife Isabella de Villers five carucates of land that were previously held by her father. Also included was housebote, haybote and firebote from the wood next to the archbishop's forest, provided that the wood was cut 'by view of his foresters', in other words under supervision.[56] Similarly, in 1340 Walter de Lacy granted lands, property and a mill at Mariners (Mornington) near Drogheda, Co. Meath to the abbot and monks of St. Mary's of Furness, England, and as part of the grant they were also entitled to timber from his forest of Trim and along the river Boyne.[57]

It is, however, as venues for hunting that forests and chases have become most familiar to the modern reader. The animals protected by forest law were red, fallow and roe deer as well as wild pigs. However, roe deer were removed from the list of 'beasts of the forest' in England after 1338, and were not present in Ireland until they were imported for landscaped parks in the nineteenth century.[58] As noted above, it can be argued that deer hunting was of significantly less relative importance in Ireland than in England. While deer bones are most commonly found at castle sites, at around one percent of zooarchaeological assemblages, the proportions are much lower than at comparable English sites, where they make up around eight percent. This suggests that much less elite hunting was taking place in Ireland than in England, and various economic, political and military reasons have been identified to account for this difference.[59] Although some of the English kings were keen huntsmen, they were rarely present in Ireland and therefore hunting in the royal forests was primarily undertaken by professional huntsmen sourcing venison and live deer for feasts and to give as gifts, and by local elites granted permission to hunt. These grants and gifts were highly valued signs of royal favour. For example, in 1250 and 1251 Walter de Burgh received four stags and four does from the forest of Slefco/Slescho, while in 1253 Hugh, bishop of Ossory received a gift of five stags from the royal forest at Decies.[60] Connacht is exceptional in that hunting is the only function noted for this forest. However, even by the first half of the thirteenth century this was an area in which Anglo-Norman control was limited and the density of settlement was low, so there would have been little demand for construction timber.[61]

Zooarchaeological evidence for venison consumption in the later medieval period also shows that the elite were successful in controlling access to this prestigious food. A comparative study of Irish excavations shows that deer bones made up one percent of the faunal remains from a range of castle excavations, compared to only 0.1 percent on ecclesiastical sites, 0.2 percent on rural non-elite sites and 0.4 percent on urban sites (Table 3).[62] As noted above, even the figure for castles is particularly low compared to England.[63] Furthermore, of those bones that could be identified to species, seventy-four percent were from red deer rather than fallow deer, rising to eighty-four percent across all site types, compared to only forty-one percent on elite sites in England.[64] Given their relative scarcity in Ireland it is likely that fallow deer were closely

[49] Beglane, *Anglo-Norman Parks in Medieval Ireland*, 54–60; F. Beglane, The social significance of game in the diet of later medieval Ireland, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 115C (2015) 167–196.
[50] J. Lydon, The expansion and consolidation of the colony, in: Cosgrove (Ed.), *A New History of Ireland: Volume 2*, 164–165.
[51] Grant, *The Royal Forests of England*, 99.
[52] Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 3, nos. 641, 741.
[53] Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 3, no. 965.
[54] Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 2, no. 2195; Berry, *Statutes and Ordinances and Acts of the Parliament of Ireland*, 219.
[55] James, *A History of English Forestry*, 42, 45; N.D.G. James, *An Historical Dictionary of Forestry and Woodland Terms*, Oxford, 1991.
[56] McNeill, *Calendar of Archbishop Alen's Register*, 69–70.
[57] Deputy keeper of the records, *Calendar of the Patent Rolls Edward I to Richard III*, third edition, London, 1910, Volume 5, 52.
[58] Cantor and Wilson, The medieval deer-parks of Dorset: III, 141; James, *A History of English Forestry*, 34; F. McCormick, Early evidence for wild animals in Ireland, in: N. Benecke (Ed.), *The Holocene History of the European Vertebrate Fauna*, Berlin, 1999, 355–371.
[59] See Beglane, *Anglo-Norman Parks in Medieval Ireland*, 50–60; Beglane, The social significance of game in the diet of later medieval Ireland.
[60] Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 1, nos. 3076, 3197; 2, no. 3241.
[61] Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 1, no. 1512; 2, nos. 1321, 1407, 1434.
[62] Beglane, The social significance of game in the diet of later medieval Ireland, Table 1.
[63] N. Sykes, *The Norman Conquest: A Zooarchaeological Perspective*, Oxford, 2007, Appendix 1; Beglane, *Anglo-Norman Parks in Medieval Ireland*, 52.
[64] Beglane, The social significance of game in the diet of later medieval Ireland, Table 1; Sykes, *The Norman Conquest*, Appendix 1.

guarded and only kept in parks rather than living wild, either inside or outside forests. By contrast, red deer were usually wild and their dominance over fallow deer strongly suggests a focus on cross-country *par force* chases of a single animal, or on drives, in which multiple deer were involved, and where in both cases deer and hunters travelled over considerable distances. Forests, warrens and other open or unregulated landscapes would have been eminently suitable for these, which could have doubled as military training and reconnaissance events. By contrast, in parks, bow-and-stable hunting was usual. This was a more sedate activity in which deer were driven towards stationary archers.[65] While it is known that in England fallow deer were sometimes released from a park into a forest, chase or warren for a *par force* hunt this cannot be identified in Ireland from the historical or archaeological record.[66]

Forests were not empty of domestic animals, as these were taken there for pannage and agistment. Cattle, horses and pigs were generally allowed into the forest, while sheep and goats competed for food with the deer and so were normally excluded.[67] Pannage was the term given to allowing pigs to root in the woods to feed on acorns and beech mast, while agistment referred to grazing or pasturage, and fees for these provided a significant income for the crown.[68] In 1282 John fitzThomas died and an inquisition into his holdings and rights at the time of his death noted that these included pannage and vert (grazing) in the forest of Decies worth forty shillings per year.[69] The exchequer rolls show that at Glencree in 1288 the value of the pannage collected in May was five shillings and four pennies, although presumably this related to payment either collected in arrears from the previous autumn or in advance for the coming autumn. Similarly, in December 1292 the rolls show that Robert de Balycogan paid two shillings and four pennies for the pannage at Glencree.[70] The king or lord could also use the forest for his own grazing animals. For example, in 1211–1212 the king's steward put 173 cows into the forest of Trim.[71] Settlement might also take place within a forest. In 1213 Alan fitzRoland was granted forest rights over his lands in Ireland, and was also entitled to the 'fairs and markets belonging to that land', suggesting that at least in this case the forest included inhabited areas.[72] It is possible that arable agriculture also took place within the forest; although no specific references to this have been identified thus far.

Administration of forests

As described above, detailed documentary sources for the administration of forests are extremely limited. In 1216 the *Magna Carta for Ireland* refers to justices of the forest, and they are mentioned again in 1284–1285 in the *Statutes of Westminster the First*, making it clear that these roles did exist.[73] In 1219 Thomas fitzAdam was entrusted with the care of all of the king's forest in Ireland.[74] Later, in 1227 Richard de Burgh was charged with the care of both the forest in Connacht and also the forest of Decies, taking over from Thomas fitzAnthony in Decies.[75] Richard was a rising star in the Anglo-Norman administration, and his appointment shows the importance attached to maintaining the forests. He had been appointed seneschal of Munster and keeper of the castle of Limerick in both 1223 and 1225 and was regranted Connacht in 1226. Furthermore, he was given the custody of the counties of Cork and Waterford and all the crown lands in Decies and in Desmond prior to being appointed iusticiar of Ireland in 1228.[76] George Turner noted that in many cases the wardens of forests were also the wardens of nearby castles, and in de Burgh's case this certainly seems to have been true.[77] There are also occasional references to foresters in various records and to men with the surname 'Forester' or 'le Forester'.

Not all of the land within royal forests was held directly by the crown. Instead, in some cases the monarch had the hunting and timber rights, while another individual or organisation could hold the actual land.[78] Where the land was held by the church, this could lead to complications in determining whether forest law or church law applied. Interestingly, a dispute between the archbishop of Dublin and the keeper of the royal forest is another occasion where specific officials of the forest are mentioned.[79]

The archbishopric of Dublin held a considerable area of land within the royal forests around Dublin, and this led to tension and disputes over the years. In 1219–1220, Thomas fitzAdam, recently appointed keeper of the royal forests, complained to the king that the then archbishop of Dublin, Henry de Loundres 'strives to disinherit the K. of his forest'.[80] Thomas stated that some of the archbishop's men, who had been cutting wood in the forest, had beaten and robbed a number of foresters. He also complained that when a poacher was followed back to his house and found to have 'his bow, with a bloody arrow, a stag's antlers, also bloody, a hide, and some venison' he arrested him, at which point the archbishop demanded that he release the man as the culprit had been taken on church lands. Being refused, the archbishop excommunicated Thomas, arguing that 'the land, wood, forest, and beasts were his' and that Thomas was exceeding his powers under the charters of King John. Eventually, in March, the king took the archbishop's side in the matter, telling Thomas to 'desist from troubling the Archbishop', and subsequently, in August, he replaced Thomas with Geoffrey de Marisco.[81] Tensions evidently continued however, and in 1228–1229 Luke, archbishop elect of Dublin, paid a 'fine' or a fee of three hundred marks (two hundred pounds) to disafforest those parts of the royal forests around Dublin where the land was held by the archbishopric.[82]

Since the deer in the forests were reserved for the king, poaching was an ongoing issue that needed to be dealt with. In addition to the case described above, in which jurisdiction was disputed between the archbishop of Dublin and the keeper of the royal forest, another example is worthy of note. The abbot and monks of St Mary's in Dublin were accused of poaching in the royal forest using greyhounds, nets and 'engines', meaning ingenious devices. The abbot was acquitted when he successfully argued that he had regularly taken deer with the full knowledge and consent of

[65] Beglane, *Anglo-Norman Parks in Medieval Ireland*, 50–56.
[66] J. Langton, English bishops' hunting rights, hunts and hunting grounds, in: D.W. Rollason (Ed.), *Princes of the Church and their Palaces*, Abingdon, 2017, 251–275.
[67] James, *A History of English Forestry*, 43.
[68] Young, *The Royal Forests of Medieval England*, 129.
[69] P. Dryburgh and B. Smith, *Inquisitions and Extents of Medieval Ireland*, n.p., 2007. no. 40.
[70] Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 3, nos. 371, 1148.
[71] Davies and Quinn, *The Irish Pipe Roll of 14 John*, 37.
[72] Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 1, no. 463.
[73] Berry, *Statutes and Ordinances, and Acts of the Parliament of Ireland*, 17, 19, 51.
[74] Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 1, no. 891.
[75] Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 1, nos 1512, 1513.
[76] B. Smith, Burgh, Richard de (*d.*1243), Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3994, last accessed 15 October 2011.
[77] Turner, *Select Pleas of the Forest*, xvii.
[78] Cantor and Wilson, The medieval deer-parks of Dorset: II, 141; James, *A History of English Forestry*, 3; Rackham, *The History of the Countryside*, 130; Watts, Wiltshire deer parks.
[79] Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 1, no. 926.
[80] Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 1, nos. 891, 926.
[81] Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 1, nos. 925, 926, 930, 932, 933, 951.
[82] Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 1, nos. 1657, 1757, 1760, 1765, 1766, 1769, 1770, 1783; McNeill, *Calendar of Archbishop Alen's Register*, 62.

the sheriff.[83] This example of collusion by royal officials is interesting, as is the willingness of members of the church to engage in illicit activity. Even the archbishop of Dublin himself was not above poaching deer. In 1262 Archbishop Fulk de Sanford was subject to royal judgement after taking four does without warrant in Cannock Forest, Staffordshire.[84]

As well as theft of venison, theft of vert or vegetation could also be a problem. For this reason, estovers were usually granted on the basis that the wood should be cut under the supervision of the foresters. However, cases were not always straightforward. In 1305 a carpenter, Thomas de Sandeby, was accused of stealing timber and wood from Glencree and was kept imprisoned in irons for three weeks.[85] He was eventually acquitted but issued a complaint that the king's forester, John Matheu, had originally 'attached' or arrested him, but was subsequently the chairman of the jury that acquitted him, despite John having originally claimed to have caught him in the act for which he was eventually found not guilty. There was evidently some history of disagreement between the two, which did not get transcribed into the court documents and this example provides an insight into the way complex relationships between individuals in small communities could shape the administration of forests.

Disafforestation

While they remained in place, royal forests were a source of revenue for pannage, agistment, timber and fines for illicit acts such as poaching or creation of 'assarts' (new areas of cultivation). However, disafforestation could also be lucrative for the crown.[86] The *Magna Carta for Ireland* included disafforestation of those forests that had been created during John's reign as well as a review of earlier creations. However, the number of forests in Ireland was relatively low and the proportion of land held as liberties by the great lords was relatively large, so that this probably had little practical effect outside the greater Dublin/Wicklow area.[87] As described above, in 1229 Luke, archbishop elect of Dublin, whose lands were directly affected by forest law, found that it was in his interest to pay a fee of three hundred marks (two hundred pounds) to the Crown to obtain disafforestation of part of the royal forest.[88] This allowed him to hunt on the land himself and to develop his holdings as he saw fit, without requiring royal permission for such matters as creating new assarts, fencing fields or cutting timber. Furthermore, and probably more importantly, it solved the problem of multiple systems of law coexisting on a single piece of ground. The overall effect, therefore, was to increase the potential economic value of the lands and the level of control of the archbishop within his territory.[89]

Another well documented example of disafforestation is that of the forests of Ross and Taghmon in the modern Co. Wexford, which occurred at some time between 1231 and 1234.[90] These two private forests were held by Richard, earl marshal within his liberty of Leinster, and it is likely that he agreed to disafforest them with the aim of stimulating economic development. In this case the tenants paid six hundred marks (four hundred pounds) for the disafforestation. Again, following disafforestation, they would have been free to develop the lands within their holdings.[91]

Conclusions

The study of Irish medieval forests and chases has had remarkably little attention to date. It is clear, however, that they were important landscape features within the manorial system of later medieval Ireland. The symbolic control over forest resources and the ability to give precedence to hunting, which was essentially a leisure pursuit, over economic production, are key to understanding the role of these land rights in Anglo-Norman society.

Forests and chases, with rights over venison and vert and with a full complement of foresters and forest courts, were held only by the king and certain high ranking individuals such as the archbishop of Dublin, the holders of liberties and major lordships. Rights of free chase were rarely granted since these allowed control over the hunting of deer and wild boar, which were considered to be the most prestigious game species. Access to these species is therefore reflected in the status of those holding forests and rights of free chase: the highest echelons of Anglo-Norman society.

On the surface, forests and chases appear to be significant as sources of food, timber, pasture and pannage. However their calorific and economic value was far outstripped by their symbolic value. Along with the possession of a park or a right of free warren, these land rights were critical in defining the holder as a member of the elite. They were symbols of degrees of royal favour and so were hotly sought after. The zooarchaeological evidence shows that wild foods were concentrated in elite households, but that they added little as a proportion of the total calories consumed. Instead, they provided variety and the ability to demonstrate status through access to regulated goods. Furthermore, these land rights also enabled elite control over resources, preventing tenants from freely accessing agistment, pannage, wild foods, timber and other woodland products. In this sense they had an economic function, since tenants and others could then be charged for these. Whereas in England tenants often sought to retain forests and restrict disafforestation, which would allow local elites more control over land usage, in Ireland, at least at Ross and Taghmon, it was the tenants who sought disafforestation.

The forests certainly had an important role in providing venues for royal and elite hunting parties. Yet it has been argued here that in Ireland, with high levels of absenteeism by the elite and with only very rare royal visits, this was not their main function. Instead their main value was the power to control access to venison and timber trees that could be used as gifts, and to provide opportunities for giving lucrative positions to favoured subjects and so bind them closer to the crown.[92] As such, the English forest system has been described as 'a perfect instrument for the monopolization of natural resources in the interests of the rulers of feudal England', and the same was true of Ireland.[93]

[83] J.T. Gilbert, *Chartularies of St. Mary's Abbey, Dublin, with the Register of its House at Dunbrody, and Annals of Ireland*, Dublin, 1884, 4, 136–137.

[84] J. Birrell, *The Forests of Cannock and Kinver: Select Documents*, Stafford, 1999, 46.

[85] J. Mills and M.C. Griffiths, *Calendar of the Justiciary Rolls or Proceedings in the Court of the Justiciar of Ireland Preserved in the Public Record Office of Ireland*, Dublin, 1905–1914, Volume 2, 35.

[86] Y.J. Serovayskaya, Royal forests in England and their income in the budget of the feudal monarchy from the mid twelfth to the early thirteenth centuries, in: Watkins (Ed.), *European Woods and Forests*, 33–38; Young, *The Royal Forests of Medieval England*, 20–21, 39.

[87] Berry, *Statutes and Ordinances, and Acts of the Parliament of Ireland*, 17, 19.

[88] Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, Volume 1, nos. 1657, 1757, 1760, 1765, 1766, 1769, 1770, 1783.

[89] Gilbert, *Historical and Municipal Documents of Ireland*, 538–540; Forbes, Some legendary and historical references to Irish woods.

[90] Orpen, Charters of Earl Richard Marshal of the forests of Ross and Taghmon.

[91] J. Seery, The forest of Taghmon deforestation charter of 1232, *Journal of the Taghmon Historical Society* 6 (2005) 1–7; Orpen, Charters of Earl Richard Marshal of the forests of Ross and Taghmon; Forbes, Some legendary and historical references to Irish woods.

[92] James, *A History of English Forestry*, 2; Rackham, *The History of the Countryside*, 138.

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